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The new IFOAM EU board elected at the 7th general assembly of IFOAM EU, held on Tuesday, 11 February 2014 at BioFach in Nuremberg, Germany © John Portelli

Members of the new board (from left to right):
- Dominique Marion, FNAB, France
- Albena Simeonova, Bulgarian Organic Products Association, Bulgaria
- Vice President for Policy: Thomas Fertl, BIO AUSTRIA
- President: Christopher Stopes, EcoS Consultancy, United Kingdom
- Bavo van den Idsert, Bionext, Netherlands
- Vice President for Regulation: Sabine Eigenschink, Austria Bio Garantie, Austria
- Treasurer: José Luís Garcia Melgarejo, ECOVALIA, Spain
- Jan Piagge, Bioland e.V., Germany
- Aira Sevón, Finnish Organic Association Luomutilto Ry, Finland (not pictured)
Dear readers,

With the new organic regulation draft and new European organic action plan expected to be published by the European Commission next month, as well as mapping out the future development of the sector, strong leadership of the organic sector in Europe is extremely important. A strong mandate is needed to guide these ambitious processes and IFOAM EU is proud to announce that IFOAM EU members turned out in large numbers for an extraordinary general assembly, with 25 countries and 112 members represented.

The 7th general assembly of IFOAM EU was held on Tuesday, 11 February 2014 at BioFach in Nuremberg, Germany. A key point on the agenda was the election of a new board, which follows a structural change approved by last year’s general assembly. As of yesterday IFOAM EU is now governed by a two chamber system with the first chamber being the board elected by the general assembly; and the second-chamber being elected nationally amongst IFOAM EU members in a given country and with each country represented having one vote.

The new two chamber structure is already actively working on the regulation revision process, including through the elaboration of concrete proposals for the improvement of the organic legal framework.

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank you, our members, for the support you have shown at the General Assembly and wish us all success in the work for an organic regulation that maintains the organic principles while matching the reality of production whilst promoting and supporting sustainable food and farming for the benefit of people and planet.

Sincerely

Christopher Stopes
IFOAM EU President

© John Portelli
Opposition against genetic modification (GM) in food and farming is strong in the EU. Consumers do not want it: Eurobarometer polls show that a large majority of EU citizens are worried about GMOs in food and the fact that supermarkets do not stock GM food on their shelves reflects the fact that there is no market for it.

Deputies do not want it: two-thirds of the Members of the European Parliament opposed the authorisation of GM maize 1507 on 16 January.

Finally, Member States do not want it either: on 11 February 19 member states opposed the authorisation of GM maize 1507 for cultivation in the EU in a position taken in the European Council. 19 is a clear majority, but the Member States voting this way were not sufficient for a qualified majority which is required for decision-making. Therefore, the European Commission will whether decide to adopt or to withdraw the proposal for authorisation.

NGOs including IFOAM EU have demanded that GM maize 1507 not be authorized. But despite the Council opinion the Commissioner in charge, Tonio Borg, seems to be determined to authorise the maize. His public statements, including via Twitter, draw attention to another yet related subject: Member-State discussions on the possibility of banning the cultivation of GMOs on their territory. This proposal has been on hold since the Danish EU presidency did not achieve a decision in the Council in 2012. Now Commissioner Borg has reopened the door to the Danish compromise and its weaknesses, such as an option that would give biotech-companies owning the GMOs in question a final say in the approval of national bans. On the other hand, France is interested in strong national rights for GMO bans. The issue is to be discussed in the Council of Environmental ministers on 3 March. While a strengthened right for national bans is attractive to some Member States, it does not solve the contamination risk for the whole food sector and must not be used by the Commission to opt out from introducing responsible risk management.

Get in contact with your national ministries and tell then the gaps in GMO legislation as regards safety and liability must be closed and on an improved proposal for national bans introduced.

Commissioner Borg can give the green light for the cultivation of GM maize 1507 in the EU. It may even come right after the discussion in the ENVI Council. Tweet: @borgton to stopthecrop and to withdraw the GM maize 1507 authorisation proposal!

The whole GMO debate should be considered in the context of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations. The food safety rules of the EU are an obstacle for US food industry that some negotiators would like to overcome. Despite the fact that trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht has declared that EU food safety standards on biotechnology would not be touched, the US clearly has a strong interest to water down EU GMO rules. The Commission’s work to protect EU legislation and citizens’ wishes must be closely scrutinized.

The Commission plans to publish the evaluation report on GMO-free labelling schemes before the coming summer break, which could also be linked to the TTIP negotiation. Stakeholders were consulted on this issue in summer 2012. In the EU it is compulsory to label food and feed which contain GMOs and some voluntary national GMO-free labelling schemes complement this, but the American food industry would prefer to see removal of the labelling requirement and voluntary GMO-free labelling only. Rumours suggest that the Commission will also bring up the question of thresholds for GMO traces in food, feed and seed again.

EU and US negotiators will meet again in Brussels during the week of 10 March for TTIP negotiations. Civil Society actions are planned for 13 March – Hands off our food!
1 NEWS FROM IFOAM EU WORKING FIELDS

1.1 REGULATION

IFOAM EU UPDATE ON THE ORGANIC REGULATION LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Where we are now
Regarding the possible new organic regulation, the draft proposal will need to be adopted by the college of commissioners. Once the European Commission has published its legal proposal for a new Organic Regulation, discussions in the Council working group will start and the presentation of this proposal is on the agenda of the Council of the European Union meeting of 24 March 2014. Discussions in the European Parliament will start after the summer break, when the newly elected Members of Parliament will have settled in and the Committees decided.

What IFOAM EU is doing
IFOAM EU continues to advocate for legislation that helps drive the sector forward while taking the reality of production into account. This is an important time as the Commission is expected to publish its draft in March. Since the beginning of the Organic Regulation Review process, IFOAM EU has supported the objective to further improve the organic regulation and has made many concrete suggestions on how to do so. For more information on IFOAM EU contributions and the process so far, see the January newsletter.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION REPORT OF THE REGULATION REVIEW PUBLISHED

The independent ex-post evaluation report on the current organic regulatory framework has been published on the website of the European Commission on 27 January 2014. It was produced by the Commission-appointed consortium of institutes and experts led by the German Thünen Institute of Farm Economics. The report concluded that “the EU legislation on organic farming generally provides a sound basis for a sustainable development of organic production in the European Union”, but that there are a number of areas in which the regulation could be improved.

The production rules are deemed generally adequate in terms of achieving the global objectives of the Regulation and the objectives of organic production, but have shortcomings in implementation. According to the report, there is a lack of harmonised interpretation and enforcement at Member poultry production) and guidance would be needed on how to translate some objectives, such as high biodiversity, into operational rules.

IFOAM EU REGULATION HEARING FOR STAKEHOLDERS

To give organic stakeholders the possibility of contributing to IFOAM EU feedback to the Commission on the draft regulation, IFOAM EU is organising a hearing on the organic regulation review together with the representation office of Baden-Württemberg in Brussels. The hearing will take place on 29 April 2014 at the Baden Württemberg State Representation at the European Union. Save the date now!

More info on www.ifoam-eu.org soon
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTES ON COMMISSION’S FOOD & FEED CONTROLS PROPOSAL

On Thursday, 20 February the “Environment, Public Health and Food Safety” (ENVI) committee of the European Parliament, voted on amendments to the Commission proposal on official controls for food and feed. A huge number of amendments – 1069 amendments from the ENVI committee members and 150 amendments from members of the “Agriculture and Rural Development” parliamentary committee were subject to vote.

IFOAM EU had previously communicated its position to the Members of the European Parliament. Many of the amendments supported by IFOAM EU to protect the specificity of control activities in the organic sector have now been adopted by the ENVI committee.

In a next step the Parliament opinion has to be adopted by plenary voting, expected in April 2014 to enter discussion with COM/Council.
1.2 POLICY

**CAP**

ASK YOUR MINISTER TO SAVE ECOLOGICAL FOCUS AREAS FROM PESTICIDES!

Ask your minister to save Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) from pesticides by getting involved a new action launched through the ARC 2020 network as part of the Good Food Good Farming campaign.

The action initiated by IFOAM EU and other civil society groups calls on farmers and citizens to remind their Agriculture Ministers that agrochemical use and biodiversity management are not compatible and must not be permitted when growing nitrogen-fixing crops on EFAs under Pillar 1 greening of the CAP direct payments. As reported in the January issue of the IFOAM EU newsletter these criteria are part of the CAP delegated acts which lay down further details on certain articles, according to their reference in the basic legal texts. The Commission is expected to adopt these rules on 10 March with the European Parliament and the AGRI Council having the right to object within a two-month period after their adoption. IFOAM EU has also called on Cabinets of EU Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Cioloş, Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik and Climate Change Commissioner Connie Hedegaard to defend the final agreement on Pillar 1 greening and reject any loopholes that could allow agrochemical use on these areas in a common letter sent with other NGOs.

**AGRICULTURE MINISTERS AND MEPS INTENSIFY PRESSURE TO ALLOW USE OF AGROCHEMICAL USE ON EFAS**

A number of Agriculture Ministers have increased pressure on the Commission to permit the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers on EFAs. Many Agriculture Ministers have been calling for allowing agrochemical use on EFAs for some time; however these calls have intensified in the last month with a so called non-paper being circulated in Agriculture Council. The issue was also highlighted by a number of Ministers during the last Council meeting on 17 February. These calls have also been echoed by MEPs responsible for leading the European Parliament position on CAP reform.

**COMMISSION PUBLISHES LEGAL PROPOSALS ON CAP SCHOOL FRUIT AND MILK SCHEMES**

Legislative proposals on the reform of the CAP School Fruit and Milk schemes have been published by the European Commission. These schemes derive from the CAP Single Common Market Organisation and part of the new regulation that was adopted by the European Commission in December 2013 as part of the overall CAP 2014-2020 reform package. The regulation provides the legal and financial framework for the distribution of certain agricultural products to school children under the School Milk Scheme and the School Fruit Scheme. The proposals seek to combine the currently separate schemes into a joint programme with a budget of €230 million per school each year which includes an allocation of €150 million for fruit and vegetables and €80 million for milk. IFOAM EU has called for the use of organic fruit to be incentivised under the school fruit scheme through higher EU co-financing for organic produce, and prioritisation of the provision of organic food in schools. This is a means to provide healthy and environmentally friendly produce and to build awareness about organic farming’s important contribution to sustainability.
HANDBOOK ON SUSTAINABLE BIOGAS PRODUCTION LAUNCHED

This new handbook describes:
• The general principles of biogas production as well as differences between organic and conventional systems are described.
• The benefits of organically produced biogas for the environment and for the farmer.
• Best practice examples of successful implementations of biogas into organic farming.

There is also an extensive section, “getting started”, devoted to practical implementation. It explains which specific aspects to consider when realizing a biogas project. The manual is completed with a further information part.

“Sustainable biogas production – A handbook for organic farmers” is available in English, German, French, Bulgarian, Polish, Danish and Spanish on the SUSTAIN-GAS website. It has been written and published by SUSTAINGAS, a project in the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the European Union focussed on enhancing sustainable biogas production in organic agriculture.

The BioFach launch and workshop
The book was launched in a seminar that took place on 14 February at the BioFach organic fair in Nuremberg, Germany. Speakers’ presentations were followed by discussions with an engaged international audience about the sustainability, the effects on soil life and the economic viability of biogas production on organic farms.

In the first presentation, Antje Kölling (IFOAM EU) outlined that biogas is in very different stages in the different EU Member States. For example, in Germany biogas subsidies are being criticised for having caused a gold-rush on huge biogas plants, fed with maize and consequently leading to maize monoculture. In other Member States, biogas plants are still very rare. That is why the aim of SUSTAINGAS is to set criteria, provide guidance and showcase examples for biogas production that contributes to the ecological sustainability and to the economic viability of farms.

Uli Zerger from FiBL explained that SUSTAINGAS found in interviews with organic farmers that there is significant interest in biogas. He presented the handbook, which provides information to help to make decisions and plan further steps. He clearly highlighted the potential benefits of biogas production for the organic farm, such as improved organic fertilizers resulting in higher yields and additional farm income and positive benefits for the environment (more efficient rhizobia bacteria, use of nature conservation green cut).

Gerald Herrmann from Organic Services explained how a 2-stepbiogas processing plant that includes a “hydrolysis” stage can simplify the process if mainly long-fibre roughage, manure with high straw content and other materials high in lignin and celluloses, but low in easily digestible energy are used. One advantage is that the digester does not need to be fed in exact doses.

Organic farmer Achim Ruf from Bannsteinhof brought a practical example from his own farm. After building a biogas plant in 2009 with a capacity of 75kw, he extended the plant in 2012 to 180 kW. The plant is situated on a 150ha farm with a suckler cow herd, and produces cereals, oil seed crops and spices. The area for cereal production has been slightly reduced following the installation of the biogas plant, as this area is now used to produce clover grass for biogas production, but this reduction is compensated for by grain yield being increased thanks to the quality of the biogas digestate as fertiliser. The farm’s cereals sales remain the same.
NEW PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS POTENTIAL FOR ORGANIC IN EUROPE UNDER NEW CAP

“Organic in Europe: Prospects and Developments” – a new book from IFOAM EU, FiBL and CIHEAM-IAMB – highlights the potential of EU organic food and farming to develop and expand if the new CAP is implemented in an effective way and supports greener and fairer farming across Europe.

The book also outlines the latest trends for Organic in Europe showing that the sector made increases in organic agricultural land, producers and the market in 2012. The publication, part of IFOAM EU’s Mind the CAP campaign, looks at the latest trends in EU public policy and market development across Europe including:

- An overview of the latest policy developments in the EU to 2020 from the reform of the CAP 2014-202 and the potential for organic sector research and innovation under the new EU Research Framework Horizon and the European Innovation Partnership to the EU Organic Regulation review
- Analyses of policy in action from case studies on current and future EU rural development programming in EU member states and regions to the contribution of organic action plans for sector development
- Facts and figures on latest farming and market trends including national reports on current status and developments of the organic sector across Europe

The book was launched on 14 February at an IFOAM EU workshop at BioFach entitled “Mind the CAP: Policy Opportunities and Organic Market Development in Europe”.

Organic in Europe is now available to order on the IFOAM Bookstore

New publication from IFOAM EU, FiBL and CIHEAM-IAMB

- Latest growth trends
- Europe-wide production & sales statistics, including per country
- Farming and food policy overview
- Case studies on support mechanisms

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SEED LEGISLATION TEXT – WILL IT STAY ON THE SHELF?

The European Parliament’s plenary is likely to vote on the proposal to reject the Commission text for a new regulation on the marketing of plant reproductive material on 13 March. This is the result of the preceding votes in the AGRI committee (10 February) and ENVI committee (5 February) of the European Parliament which both recommended rejecting the Commission proposal. Even if the proposal is rejected and the Commission asked to withdraw the proposal and come up with a better one, the situation would still remain unclear, as the Commission would have several options. However, outright rejection is not the most likely outcome; rather it is most likely that the next European Parliament will have the job of taking up the proposed seed legislation.

Remind the Commissioner and Members of the European Parliament of their responsibility towards agro-biodiversity, send them organic seeds with a message. Arche Noah has developed a seed packs you can send to the Commissioner and to MEPs with the Austrian artist Attersee. The next newsletter will contain further ideas for action on seed.

SEED LEGISLATION: DISCUSSIONS WITH POLICY MAKERS AND ORGANIC STAKEHOLDERS

The most appropriate way to regulate the market for plant reproductive material needs deeper assessment and dialogue between a broad range of stakeholders and policy makers.

On 22 January, Demeter International organised a conference on the future of seed with the patronage of IFOAM EU. Key questions addressed were:

- Why organic breeding is needed
- What are good models for the ownership of seed and funding breeding work
- Current seed legislation reform

The conference, and especially the workshop dedicated to the legislation, was a platform for diverse stakeholders and European Commission representatives to discuss approaches to better defining space in the legislation for professional work on genetic resources without compulsory registration and for less uniform material. These ideas have been taken up under the current legislative proposal as “niche market” and “heterogenous material,” but the concepts used in the text are in no way sufficient to allow for proper work.

Another event in Brussels took place in the European Parliament on 29 January: The Greens-EFA Group presented their “Concentration of market power in the EU seed market.” IFOAM EU was invited to present on the seed law reform and engaged in the discussion concerning which criteria are necessary for the registration of new varieties.

On 12 February, the Italian organic farming organisation AIAB and IFOAM EU held a joint seminar at Biofach to inform the organic sector about the legislative and other future challenges for organic breeding and the seed work of farmers, and give participants the opportunity to voice their needs and concerns.

Finally, the legislation reform was also a key topic at the annual Eco-Fruit conference on 17–19 February. Fruit producers used the chance to discuss the specific needs of the fruit sector with IFOAM EU Director Marco Schlüter. For example, they highlighted that many fruit tree varieties are not yet characterised therefore a “closed list” for the registration of conservation varieties and the restriction of marketing to registered varieties only would harm biodiversity in this field.

Note: discussions and articles very often refer to “seed”, but propagating material other than seed is often also intended. All propagating material is included in the legislation review.
PARLIAMENT INITIATIVE ON BREEDING

The European Parliament adopted the initiative report by Marit Paulsen on plant breeding on 25 February. Although the report highlights the importance of genetic diversity and plant breeding, it contained hotly contested issues. References to the EU legislation on GMOs as well as demands for increased investment in accelerated plant breeding techniques suggest that an interest in changing GMO legislation and facilitating the use of GMOs are behind the report. The initiative report is not required to conclude any legislative process and some issues outlined in the report require fundamental societal discussion rather than a fast vote as was now the case. The adopted report will be used for lobby purposes. However, on a positive note a reference to participatory breeding remained in the text.

CLIMATE CHANGE

SHOW TO EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS AMBITIOUS TARGETS ARE NEEDED TO STOP CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is happening – and its effects are visible already now. Farming is rendered more challenging due to increasing weather extremes as floods or droughts: harvest loss, irreplaceable damage of natural resources and destruction of farmers’ economic grounds are among the most serious effects of climate change.

The right political framework will be decisive in determining the precise scale of climate change. On 22 January 2014, the European Commission’s DG Climate Action brought forward its objectives for the European climate and energy policy until 2030. This proposal lacks the needed ambitious reduction targets of climate gases that could make sure that the temperature rise stays below the dangerous 2°C threshold. On 21 March, Heads of State and Government will vote on the objectives presented by the Commission at the next European Council meeting in Brussels.

To draw attention to the ongoing political processes and to impact on the outcome of the Council vote, stakeholders throughout Europe are invited to raise their voice and to find out more about the actions undertaken during the week of European climate action:
http://caneurope.org/climateactionweek.

Leading an initiative in your area? Interested in joint action with other organic and environmental representatives? Contact IFOAM EU’s Climate change coordinator: Lena.Wietheger [at] ifoam-eu.org
EIP-AGRI TO CALL FOR NEW FOCUS GROUP EXPERTS

The European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture (EIP-AGRI) will launch a call for experts for four new focus groups on 11 March 2014 and the themes of the focus groups will be made public on the same date.

The objectives of an EIP-AGRI focus group are:

- To take stock of the state of the art of practice in the respective theme of the focus group, listing problems and opportunities.
- To take stock of the state of the art of research in this theme, summarizing possible solutions to the problems listed.
- To identify needs from practice and propose directions for further research.
- To set priorities and suggest potential operational groups or other forms of cooperation to test solutions and disseminate outcomes.

TP Organics will publish more information on the new focus groups as soon as it’s available.

TP ORGANICS AT THE BIOFACH SCIENCE DAY

TP Organics organised two sessions about recent developments in European organic food and farming research at the 2nd BioFach Science day, held on 14 February.

“Opportunities for Innovation in Organic Farming and Agroecology” launch

The Science day opened with the launch of the joint dossier by IFOAM EU, TP Organics and ARC2020 on the European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture (EIP-AGRI) “European Innovation Partnership - Opportunities for Innovation in Organic Farming and Agroecology.” The publication is aimed at helping the organic sector and the agroecological community understand the implementation of this new policy instrument. The dossier explains the EIP-AGRI activities at EU level and the importance of the work to be done by the rural development programmes at the national and regional levels, providing operators with examples they can follow. This dossier is also available in a French version.

New TP Organics Strategic Research Agenda for more organic funding

The second Science Day session was dedicated to the revision of the Strategic Research Agenda of TP Organics. Farmers, companies and researchers discussed the top research needs for the coming years. The session was opened by Hans-Joerg Lutzeyer (European Commission, DG Research and Innovation) who illustrated the opportunities for organic food and farming in the new EU framework programme for research and innovation, Horizon 2020. He was followed by Eduardo Cuoco who explained the achievements and future activities of TP Organics and Urs Niggli who gave an inspiring presentation on the research needs of the organic sector.

These presentations provided the basis for a lively workshop both on what research is needed for the organic sector itself to develop further as well as areas where the organic sector can provide solutions to broader societal challenges.

The outcomes of the workshop will be included in the revised Strategic Research Agenda. This Agenda will be a key document to lobby for more funding for organic oriented research at EU level.

Science day was organized in cooperation with TIPI, International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISOFAR), IFOAM, IFOAM EU Group and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL). All presentations are available on Organic EPrints.
ORGANICDATANETWORK AT BIOFACH

On the 13th of February, the OrganicDataNetwork project organised a workshop at the BIOFACH organic trade fair in Nuremburg, Germany, to present the first results of the ongoing case studies on improved data collection methods in several countries and the Mediterranean region.

The workshop was moderated by Marco Schlüter, IFOAM EU. Dr Hans-Jörg Lutzeyer from DG Research and Innovation stated: “The Commission is looking forward to see the final results of the OrganicDataNetwork project to provide, especially for smaller enterprises, better access to market data”.


The first case study was presented by Anja Vieweger from The Organic Research Centre (ORC). In the UK, an annual Market report is published by the Soil Association, and the case study aims to improve the 2014 publication, expected in March. ORC carried out a survey of English organic producers’ intentions (supplementing similar surveys in Scotland and Wales) and the Soil Association carried out a survey on farmers’ markets and farm shops.

The German case study was presented by Diana Schaack from Agrarmarkt Informations-Gesellschaft mbH (AMI). Data are limited on livestock production likely to reach the market, exports and retail sales data through non-multiples, and there are no data on catering sales. With the case study, AMI aims to improve the data with an annual compulsory survey among the control bodies. AMI has published the annual market report, and work on a price report on selected European countries will soon begin.

Michal Lošťák from Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CULS), presented the Czech case study. Through interviews data collection bodies, problems in the synchronisation of the data collected through various channels were identified (e.g. FADN and organic farmers’ survey). The case study aims to bring data from various sources together to improving the existing organic data reports through better triangulation of data.

Dorian Fléchet from Agence Bio presented the French case study. Agence Bio aims tried to improve the annual organic market evaluation with several surveys of operators and of multiple retailers in relation to import and export volumes, organic fruit and vegetables in general supermarkets, wine production, pork and through better data harmonisation, for example of the product category names for some products (fruit, vegetables, groceries).

The main aim of the Italian case study, presented by Francesco Solfanelli the Università Politecnica delle Marche (UNIVPM), is to improve international and domestic market data. The Ministerial and customs datasets of imports are integrated into one common database. An expert assessment for each crop at regional level has been carried out to estimate production volume and value. Finally, UNIVPM is cross checking GFK-Eurisko household panel data with the ASSOBIO to improve the estimate of the retail sales value in non-specialized shops.

Patrizia Pugliese, from CIHEAM-IAMB, reported the preliminary results of a study of the selected Mediterranean countries which are members of the Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network (MOAN). Data of organic operators and land use are commonly available but improvement is aimed regarding product classifications, production volumes, availability and quality of import and export data. CIHEAM-IAMB closely collaborates with relevant stakeholders and fostering the inter-institutional dialogue.

The improved national market reports are due to be published this year and further results will be presented at the next project meeting in Tallin in May 2014.

www.organicdatanetwork.net

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FARM ADVISORY SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABILITY PRESENTED ON BIOFACH

The results of the STOAS (sustainability training for organic advisors) project were presented in a workshop at the BioFach organic trade fair on 15 February.

Antje Kölling from IFOAM EU gave an introduction to the relation between the STOAS project and the work of IFOAM EU, as well as the potential to continue a network of organic farm advisors in a new framework.

Matthias Stolze presented the RISE tool - developed by the University of Bern in the late nineties - and how they plan to use it in advisory services for organic farming, and tailored for this purpose. For example, a participatory approach that gives the farming family a key role in the decision-making process is crucial for success. FiBL is working with this tool in different projects in Switzerland, Denmark and Germany.

Harald Rasch from Bioland presented a project starting now in Germany, involving 40 farmers and four advisors, to increase farm sustainability through advise based on RISE.

Mark Measures from the Organic Research Centre highlighted that an advisor should ideally not spend more than half a day on a farm per visit, as otherwise farmers might lose motivation. Meaning it would be of utmost importance to keep sustainability assessment tools as simple as possible.

Measures also presented the STOAS memorandum, a final outcome of project which has been working on sustainability in organic advisory systems over the last 2 years. Advisory systems which aim to increase sustainability of farms need to consider the following according to the STOAS memorandum:

- Organic farming is a process of development and evolution towards increasing sustainability
- Regulations and standards are useful to set a common baseline for marketing but have limitations
- Farms and farmers are individuals
- Change is more effectively brought about by motivation and support
  - Farmer engagement
  - Farm evaluation
  - Support: advice, information, training
  - Development
- Sustainability assessment tools provide a useful way of engaging farmers in the process and identifying strengths weaknesses and opportunities

More information

NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS: DEVELOPING AND LINKING ORGANIC COMMUNITIES

The TP Organics secretariat supports the development of national platforms. It has recently evaluated the existing national technology platforms (NTPs) in different countries through a National Technology Platform self-assessment template and has recognised two new ones: Bionext from the Netherlands and NOBL from Flanders, Belgium. The NTPs are assessed on the base of the criteria outlined in the “Strategy for European Technology Platforms: ETP 2020” published by the European Commission in July 2013. Others are in the process of being set up. NTPs are fundamental players in ensuring the broad application of the developments in the organic sector and in linking communities and Europe.

If you are interested in finding out more about the NTPs or to set one up in your country, please contact bram.moeskops[at]tporganics.eu
2 EVENTS

2.1 PREVIEW OF EVENTS

9TH PESTICIDE ACTION WEEK, Brussels, Belgium (and 20 more countries!), 20–30 March

The Pesticide Action Week is an annual and international event, open to everyone, with the aim to promote alternatives to pesticides. The campaign takes place during the first ten days of every spring when the spreading of pesticides usually resumes.

The public is invited to find out more about the sanitary and environmental challenges caused by pesticides and learn more about possible alternatives to pesticides by taking part in one of the hundreds of organised activities: conferences, panel discussions, film shows, workshops, open days on organic farms, information stands, exhibitions, shows…

The goals of this event are:

• Raising awareness on the health and environment risks of synthetic pesticides.
• Highlighting and promoting alternative solutions.
• Building a global grassroots movement for a pesticide-free world.

ROUND TABLE ON SUSTAINABLE BIOGAS ON ORGANIC FARMS

Stakeholders and policy makers will discuss the potential of biogas production on organic farms as a contribution to farm sustainability and farm income on 8 April in the European Parliament in Brussels from 9.30 to 12.00. The event takes place in the framework of the IEE project SUSTAINGAS and will present the handbook for practitioners and guidelines for sustainable biogas production which have been developed in this project.

You can register through this link and for additional information email to: Laura.Maeso[at]ifoam-eu.org

HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE NEW DRAFT REGULATION
Brussels, Belgium, 29 April

To give organic stakeholders the possibility of contributing to IFOAM EU feedback to the Commission on the draft regulation, IFOAM EU is organising a hearing on the organic regulation review together with the representation office of Baden-Württemberg in Brussels. The hearing will take place on 29 April 2014 at the Baden Württemberg State Representation at the European Union. Save the date now!

More info on www.ifoam-eu.org soon
3 MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC – SUPPORT IFOAM EU

IFOAM EU KEY SPONSORS 2014

The contributions of sponsors allow IFOAM EU to focus on its most important work – representing organic stakeholders. This funding is a means to co-finance IFOAM EU events, projects and publications and is a highly valued contribution to our work.

A DECADE OF ORGANIC ADVOCACY IN BRUSSELS

“This anniversary publication gives a voice to our people; each contribution gives a personal perspective on how IFOAM EU has played a part in developing and delivering a common vision for organic, influencing public and business policy as well as personal practice. They speak of how our ethos is expressed in our daily lives, how the ethics of our standards and codes of conduct brings food from our farmers and growers to our tables.”

Christopher Stopes
IFOAM EU President

MAKING EUROPE MORE ORGANIC

10 YEARS OF ADVOCACY FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND FARMING

IFOAM EU Newsletter No 71, March 2014
4 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **7–8 March**  
  **The Colour of Science**  
  Berlin, Germany

- **20–22 March**  
  **EkoSeedForum**  
  Poznań, Poland

- **16–17 April**  
  **B.I.O.N’DAYS**  
  Valence, France

- **29 April**  
  **IFOAM EU hearing on the organic regulation review**  
  Nuremberg, Germany

- **1–2 June**  
  **Organic Marketing Forum**  
  Warsaw, Poland

- **10–11 September**  
  **8th European Organic Congress**  
  Bari, Italy

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**THE IFOAM ORGANIC LEADERSHIP COURSE (OLC) EUROPE 2014**

First residential session: 12–21 July 2014 in the Netherlands

Do not miss this unique opportunity to develop your skills, knowledge and leadership attitude. The IFOAM OLC brings international expertise and vision to a course that will help you attain your personal development goals. Applications are currently being accepted. The deadline is 15 April, so follow the instructions on the OLC Europe page and apply!

Find out more about the leadership course.

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This newsletter exists to inform IFOAM EU members about the work of the IFOAM EU Group and its liaison and coordination office in Brussels. IFOAM EU is the European Regional Group of the worldwide umbrella organisation IFOAM and is responsible for all matters related to organic farming with a Europe-wide scope.

[www.ifoam-eu.org](http://www.ifoam-eu.org)

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IFIOM EU team at BioFach © John Portelli